

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 HELSINKI 3009

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, FI, UR
SUBJECT: FINLAND'S SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS UNDERSCORE
FINNISH INDEPENDENCE; SOVIET RELATIONS AND HIGH LEVEL DELEGATION
RECEIVE LITTLE EMPHASIS

REF: (A) HELSINKI 2679, (B) HELSINKI 2907 (NOTAL),

SUMMARY: EXCESSIVE ATTENTION TO FINNISH-SOVIET RELATIONS
BY THE FINNS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION ANNIVERSARY
(REF) A) WAS REFRESHINGLY ABSENT FROM THE CELEBRATION OF THE
SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF FINLAND'S INDEPENDENCE DECEMBER 5-6.
ALTHOUGH CHAIRMAN KOSYGIN MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED TO DOMINATE THE
FESTIVITIES AS THE MOST IMPORTANT GUEST, HIS PRESENCE WAS
OFFSET BY THE PARTICIPATION OF SEVERAL NOTEWORTHY DELEGATIONS
FROM THE WEST, EXPECIALLY THAT FROM THE US HEADED BY MRS.
MONDALE WHO MADE A PARTICULARLY POSITIVE IMPACT. BOTH THE
FINNISH GOVERNMENT'S INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATION PROGRAM AND THE
MEDIA TREATMENT OF IT PLACED LITTLE EMPHASIS ON KOSYGIN AND THE
USSR WHILE ACCENTUATING FINLAND'S MANY-FACETED WESTERN TIES
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AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, HER INDEPENDENCE. COMMENT: THE
OVERALL TONE AND SPIRIT SURROUNDING THE INDEPENDENCE
CELEBRATION WENT A LONG WAY IN THE VIEWS OF MANY
OBSERVERS, FINNISH AND FOREIGN, TOWARD COUNTERBALANCING
THE RECENT HEAVY EMPHASIS ON RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET
UNION. END SUMMARY.

2. IN CONTRAST TO THE CLOYING TRIBUTES THE FINNS HAVE BEEN PAYING IN RECENT WEEKS TO FINNISH/SOVIET COOPERATION AND TO THE ROLE OF THE SOVIETS IN FINLAND'S ACHIEVING OF INDEPENDENCE (REF A), THE ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS AND RELATED EVENTS PLACED PRIMARY EMPHASIS ON FINLAND HERSELF. THE SOVIETS WERE TREATED, AT BEST, AS FIRST AMONG EQUAL NEIGHBORS. THE USSR HAD PERHAPS EXPECTED TO PLAY A HEAVY ROLE IN THE CELEBRATIONS BY SENDING NO LESS THAN CHAIRMAN OF THE USSR COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, ALEKSEY KOSYGIN TO HEAD ITS DELEGATION. AS SPECIALLY INVITED GUESTS (ALONG WITH FINLAND'S OTHER NEIGHBORS, THE NORDIC COUNTRIES), THE SOVIET DELEGATION DID RECEIVE SPECIAL STATUS IN THE OFFICIAL PROGRAM ALONG WITH THE NORDICS. EACH NORDIC COUNTRY ALSO SENT ITS PRIME MINISTER, AND DENMARK, NORWAY AND SWEDEN SENT HIGH-RANKING ROYALTY AS WELL. IN ADDITION TO THE SPECIALLY INVITED VISITORS, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS FROM OTHER LANDS, HEADED BY MRS. MONDALE AS PRESIDENT CARTER'S REPRESENTATIVE, THE GDR'S VICE PRESIDENT GOETTING, AND BRITAIN'S LORD GREENHILL, INTER ALIA, GAVE THE CELEBRATIONS A SOLID INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER. THE PRESENCE OF NORDIC ROYALTY AND MRS. MONDALE RECEIVED PARTICULAR ATTENTION, OFFSETTING THE PARTICIPATION OF KOSYGIN.

3. THE PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS WAS THE ONLY EVENT IN THE LARGELY CEREMONIAL SCHEDULE WHEN EVEN BRIEF REMARKS WERE CALLED FOR. KOSYGIN USED THAT
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OCCASION TO MAKE A STATEMENT OF CONGRATULATIONS AND TO READ A MESSAGE FROM BREZHNEV NOTING THAT THE ROAD TO FINLAND'S CREATION WAS OPENED BY THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION AND THAT GOOD NEIGHBORLINESS BETWEEN FINLAND AND THE USSR, BASED ON LENIN'S DECREE RECOGNIZING FINLAND'S INDEPENDENCE, HAS ACQUIRED AN "IRREVERSIBLE" NATURE. IN HIS BRIEF REPLY, PRESIDENT KEKKONEN NOTED KOSYGIN HAD SAID RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES ARE BASED ON TRUST, WHICH KEKKONEN SAID ALSO EXTENDS TO COMMERCIAL RELATIONS, AND EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT ECONOMIC RELATIONS WILL FLOURISH.

4. KOSYGIN ALSO HAD A SEPARATE PROGRAM OF WREATH LAYINGS AT THE LENIN MEMORIAL AND PRESIDENT PAASIKIVI'S TOMB AND A VISIT TO A SHIPYARD, AS WELL AS MEETINGS WITH MRS. MONDALE (HELSINKI 2919) AND THE NORDIC PRIME MINISTERS (HELSINKI 2931 AND PREVIOUS). THE MAIN EVENT IN THIS PROGRAM WAS A DECEMBER 4 CALL ON PRESIDENT KEKKONEN, WHOM HE WAS SEEING FOR THE FOURTH TIME THIS YEAR, INCLUDING EXCHANGES OF STATE VISITS AND ANNIVERSARY VISITS. THE TWO ISSUED A SHORT COMMUNIQUE CONFINED LARGELY TO THE MENTION OF CONTINUING GOOD RELATIONS AND EFFORTS TO FULFILL THE LONG-TERM ECONOMIC

COOPERATION PROGRAM AGREED TO BY THE TWO COUNTRIES EARLIER THIS YEAR.

5. THE FINNS KEPT THE OFFICIAL ANNIVERSARY PROGRAM CLEARLY SEPARATE FROM THE KOSYGIN MEETING, BOTH IN TIME AND IN TONE, AND WERE OBVIOUSLY CAREFUL TO AVOID THE APPEARANCE OF BEING TOO COZY WITH THE SOVIETS. AT THE PRESIDENT'S LUNCH ON DECEMBER 5, MRS. MONDALE WAS PLACED BESIDE KEKKONEN, WHILE KOSYGIN WAS SEATED ACROSS THE TABLE.

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IN A REMARKABLE GESTURE, MRS. MONDALE WAS ALSO INCLUDED IN THE PRESIDENT'S DINNER THAT EVENING, A FUNCTION OTHERWISE LIMITED TO THE SPECIAL DELEGATIONS FROM NEIGHBOR COUNTRIES. IN ADDITION TO CAREFUL ATTENTION TO THEIR US RELATIONS, THE FINNS ALSO CHOSE TO MAKE AN OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT, TWO DAYS BEFORE KOSYGIN'S ARRIVAL, OF THE LONG-PLANNED MILITARY REORGANIZATION WHICH WILL SHIFT THE EMPHASIS OF THEIR ARMED FORCES SOMEWHAT MORE TOWARD LAPLAND, WHERE THE ALLEGED MILITARY VACUUM HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF SOME BASICALLY ANTI-SOVIET ARTICLES IN THE WESTERN PRESS IN RECENT MONTHS. IN A FURTHER ASSERTION OF SUPPORT FOR THEIR DEFENSE POSTURE, THE FINNS ELECTED TO HOLD THEIR MAIN INDEPENDENCE MILITARY PARADE IN OULU, HEADQUARTERS OF THE LAPLAND GARRISON.

6. THESE CLEAR INDICATIONS THAT THE FINNS WERE USING
THE ANNIVERSARY TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR INDEPENDENCE RATHER
THAN ANY SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE USSR PROVIDED
THE BACKDROP FOR THE MORE DIRECT SETBACKS KOSYGIN
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EXPERIENCED IN THE REPORTED PHYSICAL REBUFF OF HIS ATTEMPT TO
SHARE A BALCONY WITH KEKKONEN AND THE POOR REVIEWS HE DREW
FROM HIS WELL-PUBLICIZED MEETING WITH THE NORDIC PRIME MINISTERS.
BOTH INCIDENTS, WHICH HAVE BEEN DESCRIBED IN PREVIOUS
REPORTING FROM THE EMBASSY AND OTHER NORDIC POSTS, WERE
SIGNIFICANT AS THEY RELATED DIRECTLY TO ATTEMPTS BY THE
SOVIETS TO INSERT THEMSELVES INTO FINNISH AND NORDIC
AFFAIRS. ACCORDING TO SEVERAL SOURCES, KOSYGIN AT THE GALA
INDEPENDENCE RECEPTION ON DECEMBER 6 HAD ATTEMPTED TO PLACE
HIMSELF BESIDE KEKKONEN ON A BALCONY FROM WHERE THE FINNISH
PRESIDENT WAS TO WAVE HIS GREETING TO GUESTS GATHERED AT THE
RECEPTION. HAD HE SUCCEEDED, KOSYGIN WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE
SYMBOLICALLY TO ASSOCIATE THE USSR WITH FINNISH INDEPENDENCE,
A GESTURE THE FINNS WERE ANXIOUS TO AVOID. KOSYGIN WAS
THEREFORE INFORMED THAT HE COULD NOT ENTER THE BALCONY,
WHICH WAS REPORTEDLY BLOCKED BY TWO OF THE PRESIDENT'S
MILITARY AIDES. WHETHER KOSYGIN'S SUBSEQUENT
IRITABILITY TOWARD THE NORDIC PRIME MINISTERS RESULTED FROM
THIS INCIDENT OR FROM FRUSTRATION AT THE SOVIETS'
RECEPTION IN GENERAL, HIS ATTEMPT TO LECTURE THE
NORDICS ON SUBJECTS FROM THE NEUTRON BOMB TO NATO TROOPS
IN NORWAY CLEARLY BACKFIRED, AND THE APPEARANCE OF THIS
INCIDENT IN THE WESTERN PRESS DID NOT HELP THE SOVIETS'
PUBLIC IMAGE HERE.

7. FINNISH MEDIAL COVERAGE OF THE CELEBRATIONS ACCENTUATED
THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORT TO ACHIEVE BALANCE. REF B REPORTED
THE HEAVY MEDIA INTEREST IN MRS. MONDALE, AND THIS
CONTINUED LAST WEEK WITH THE APPEARANCE OF A COVER STORY
ON HER BY THE INFLUENTIAL WEEKLY SUOMEN KUVALEHTI.
THE PHOTO OF MRS. MONDALE PRESENTING THE US GIFT TO
PRESIDENT KEKKONEN WAS THE ONE USED ON THE FRONT PAGES OF
MOST HELSINKI PAPERS. THE MEDIA ALSO PROMINENTLY FEATURED
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THE GIFT PRESENTATIONS OF DENMARK AND SWEDEN BOTH OF WHICH GAVE
MONEY FOR CULTURAL PROGRAMS. FINNISH TELEVISION ON DECEMBER
6 BROADCAST A UNIQUE FILMED MESSAGE FROM BRITISH PRIME
MINISTER CALLAGHAN SENDING THE UK'S CONGRATULATIONS TO
FINLAND.

8. EDITORIAL COMMENT ON THE ANNIVERSARY WAS LIGHT AND EMPHASIZED FAITH IN AN INDEPENDENT FUTURE. CONSERVATIVE INDEPENDENT UUSI SUOMI SAID FINNS HAVE CAUSE FOR SATISFACTION AND PRIDE THAT FINLAND HAS STABILIZED HER NEUTRAL INTERNATIONAL STATUS AND THAT THERE IS A BROAD CONSENSUS ABOUT THE FOUNDATIONS OF POLITICAL LIFE. CENTER PARTY SUOMENMAA REFLECTED THAT THE WARS AGAINST THE USSR HAVE TAUGHT FINLAND TO ACT MORE WISELY. SWEDISH LANGUAGE HUFVUDSTADSBLADET NOTED THAT FINNISH INDEPENDENCE COULD NOT HAVE BEEN REALIZED WITHOUT THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION, BUT "THIS DOES NOT DETRACT FROM OUR OWN CONTRIBUTION IN THE MARCH OF EVENTS." COMMUNIST KANSAN UUTISET NOT UNEXPECTEDLY AGREED THAT THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION WAS DECISIVE AND SAID THAT THE RECOGNITION OF THIS HISTORICAL TRUTH IS A MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT. THE PAPER ALSO NOTED THAT THE SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY HAD ATTRACTED MORE INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION THAN EXPECTED.

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SUOMENMAA AGREED, CALLING THE GREAT NUMBER OF FOREIGN GUESTS A SURPRISE AND CONCLUDING THAT "OUR NATIVE POLICY

OF PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE HAS BEEN NOTED AND 'FINLANDIZATION' IS UNDERSTOOD IN THE POSITIVE SENSE OF THE WORD."

9. LEST THE PRESPECTIVE OF FINNISH-SOVIET RELATIONS BE FORGOTTEN, SWEDISH LANGUAGE HUFVUDSTADSBLADET, THE ONLY HELSINKI PAPER LIKELY TO BE READ BY VISITING NORDICS, PUBLISHED A REMARKABLE EDITION DECEMBER 5 REPRODUCING 23 OF ITS FRONT PAGES FROM VARIOUS YEARS BETWEEN 1917 (INDEPENDENCE) AND 1975 (CSCE). MEMORY-JARRING HEADLINES INCLUDED "SOVIET HAS ATTACKED BRUTALLY: INDISCRIMINATE BOMBING OF CIVILIANS" (1939), "HARD PEACE TERMS" (1940), "OUR TROOPS MARCHED INTO VIBORG TESTERDAY" (1941) AND "SOVIET UNION ASKS TALKS ON APPLICATION OF ASSISTANCE PACT: 'WEST GERMAN MILITARISM THREAT ALSO TOWARD NORTHERN EUROPE.'" THE PAPER RAN ON PAGE ONE A REDUCED VERSION OF THE 1946 FRONT PAGE HEADLINING THE SENTENCING OF
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PRESIDENT RYTI AND SEVEN OTHER FORMER OFFICIALS FOR "WAR RESPONSIBILITY" AND NOTED THAT THIS ISSUE HAS BECOME TIMELY AGAIN (HELSINKI 2856 REPORTED PRESIDENT KEKKONEN'S RECENT SPEECH ON THE SUBJECT.) HUFVUDSTADSBLADET OUTDID ITSELF THE NEXT DAY BY RUNNING A FRONT-PAGE PICTURE OF KEKKONEN TALKING TO MRS. MONDALE AT LUNCH WHILE KOSYGIN, BACK TO CAMERA, WAS BENDING OVER TO RETRIEVE HIS NAPKIN.

10. COMMENT: THE SPECIAL COURTESIES AND ATTENTIONS BESTOWED ON MRS. MONDALE BY THE GOF; THE RESTRICTING OF FINNISH COMMENTS TO THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF FINNISH-SOVIET RELATIONS; THE EMBARRASSING OR CONTROVERSIAL INCIDENTS IN WHICH KOSYGIN WAS INVOLVED; THE EXTENT AND WARMTH OF THE MEDIA ATTENTION TOWARD MRS. MONDALE COMPARED TO THE LESS FLATTERING AND RATHER PERFUNCTORY COVERAGE OF KOSYGIN; THE FOCUS OF THE PRESS ON NATIONAL EVENTS: TOGETHER THESE FEATURES ADDED UP TO THE POSITIVE TONE AND SPIRIT THAT CHARACTERIZED FINLAND'S SIXTIETH INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE OCCASION DEVELOPED WENT A LONG WAY, IN THE VIEW OF MANY FINNISH AND FOREIGN OBSERVERS, TOWARD COUNTERBALANCING THE HEAVY EMPHASIS ON RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION THAT HAS CHARACTERIZED THE PAST FEW WEEKS. END
COMMENT.
RIDGWAY

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